

Amendments to the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claims 1-43 (canceled).

Claim 44. (New) A method for facilitating supplier qualification and quality management functions in a communications network environment, comprising:

qualifying suppliers, parts, and technologies in a collaborative network environment via a web-based user interface and shared data repository, said qualifying suppliers, parts, and technologies including:

acquiring supplier capabilities, part data, and supplier technology data from at least one collaborative source via said web-based user interface, said collaborative source including a supplier, a manufacturing representative, and at least one of an electronic catalog and a commercial data repository;

storing acquired data in said shared data repository, said acquired data accessible to affected collaborative sources; and

performing quality management functions via said web-based user interface and shared data repository, said quality management functions including at least one of:

managing identified changes to a supplier product;
managing process changes proposed by a supplier; and
assessing quality metrics provided by a supplier.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, further comprising recommending at least one of a technology, part, and supplier based a purchasing entity's requirements via said web-based user interface.

46. (New) The method of claim 45, further comprising:
analyzing said acquired data in light of recommendations;
selecting a supplier based upon results of said analyzing; and
providing supplier selection information and notification to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

47. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said qualifying suppliers further includes:

auditing a supplier and submitting results of said auditing to said shared data repository, said results accessible to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

48. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said qualifying technologies includes:
placing a technology survey on the Web, said technology survey accessible to at least one supplier, said technology survey associated with an engineering organization related to a technology being surveyed;
accessing a completed technology survey via said web-based user interface by said engineering organization; and
analyzing said completed technology survey and qualifying said at least one supplier based on results of said analyzing.

49. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said qualifying parts includes:
accessing part qualification data via said web-based user interface;
analyzing said part qualification data; and
qualifying said parts based upon results of said analyzing.

50. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said managing proposed changes to a supplier process includes:

submitting a proposed process change to said shared data repository by a supplier, said proposed process change accessible to collaborative sources affected by said proposed process change via said web-based user interface;

accessing said proposed process change;

analyzing said proposed process change; and

determining whether to accept said proposed process change based upon said analyzing.

51. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein said proposed changes include at least one of short-term process change, long-term process change, and off-specification change.

52. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein said performing quality management functions includes:

identifying potential problems relating to a supplier;

alerting affected collaborative sources of said potential problems;

notifying management; and

collaborating with said supplier associated with said potential problems for determining a resolution; and

generating a problem report.

53. (New) The method of claim 52, wherein problem reports are categorized by at least one of:

supplier;

problem reports that have been open for more than one month;

problem reports of a critical nature; and

problem reports related to a particular final product.

54. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein said results of said auditing include:
audit schedules,
completed audit listings; and
audit reports.

55. (New) A system for facilitating supplier qualification and quality management functions in a communications network environment, comprising:

a supplier qualification and quality management application executing on a host system;

a web-based user interface provided by supplier qualification and quality management application, said web-based user interface operable for collaboratively enabling qualification of suppliers, parts, and technologies over a network;

a shared data repository in communication with said host system;

a workstation in communication with said host system, said workstation operated by a manufacturing representative;

a link to at least one supplier over said network, said at least one supplier in communication with said host system via said web-based user interface and said network;

wherein said collaboratively enabling qualification of suppliers, parts, and technologies includes:

acquiring supplier capabilities, part data, and supplier technology data from at least one collaborative source via said web-based user interface, said collaborative source including a supplier, said manufacturing representative, and at least one of an electronic catalog and a commercial data repository;

storing acquired data in said shared data repository, said acquired data accessible to affected collaborative sources; and

performing quality management functions via said web-based user interface and shared data repository, said quality management functions including at least one of:

managing identified changes to a supplier product;

managing process changes proposed by a supplier; and

assessing quality metrics provided by a supplier.

56. (New) The system of claim 55, wherein based upon a purchasing entity's requirements, at least one of a technology, part, and supplier is recommended via said web-based user interface.

57. (New) The system of claim 56, wherein said web-based user interface is accessed by a collaborative source for performing:

analyzing said acquired data in light of recommendations;
selecting a supplier based upon results of said analyzing; and
providing supplier selection information and notification to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

58. (New) The system of claim 55, wherein said data repository stores results of supplier audits, said results accessible to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

59. (New) The system of claim 55, further comprising a technology survey for implementing technology qualification, wherein said qualifying technologies includes:

placing said technology survey on the Web, said technology survey accessible to at least one supplier, said technology survey associated with an engineering organization related to a technology being surveyed;

accessing a completed technology survey via said web-based user interface by said engineering organization; and

analyzing said completed technology survey and qualifying said at least one supplier based on results of said analyzing.

60. (New) The system of claim 55, further comprising part qualification data stored in said shared data repository, wherein said qualifying parts includes:

accessing said part qualification data via said web-based user interface;

analyzing said part qualification data; and
qualifying said parts based upon results of said analyzing.

61. (New) The system of claim 55, further comprising a process change notification, wherein said managing proposed changes to a supplier process includes:
submitting said proposed process change to said shared data repository by a supplier, said proposed process change accessible to collaborative sources affected by said proposed process change via said web-based user interface;
accessing said proposed process change;
analyzing said proposed process change; and
determining whether to accept said proposed process change based upon said analyzing.

62. (New) The system of claim 61, wherein said proposed changes include at least one of short-term process change, long-term process change, and off-specification change.

63. (New) The system of claim 55, further comprising a problem report, wherein said performing quality management functions includes:
identifying potential problems relating to a supplier;
alerting affected collaborative sources of said potential problems;
notifying management;
collaborating with said supplier associated with said potential problems for determining a resolution; and
generating said problem report.

64. (New) The system of claim 63, wherein problem reports are categorized by at least one of:
supplier;
problem reports that have been open for more than one month;
problem reports of a critical nature; and

problem reports related to a particular final product.

65. (New) The system of claim 47, wherein said results of said auditing include:
audit schedules,
completed audit listings; and
audit reports.

66. (New) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for facilitating supplier qualification and quality management functions in a communications network environment, program code including instructions for causing a host system to implement a method, comprising:

qualifying suppliers, parts, and technologies in a collaborative network environment via a web-based user interface and shared data repository, said qualifying suppliers, parts, and technologies including:

acquiring supplier capabilities, part data, and supplier technology data from at least one collaborative source via said web-based user interface, said collaborative source including a supplier, a manufacturing representative, and at least one of an electronic catalog and a commercial data repository;

storing acquired data in said shared data repository, said acquired data accessible to affected collaborative sources; and

performing quality management functions via said web-based user interface and shared data repository, said quality management functions including at least one of:

managing identified changes to a supplier product;
managing process changes proposed by a supplier; and
assessing quality metrics provided by a supplier.

67. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, further comprising instructions for causing said host system to implement: recommending at least one of a technology, part, and supplier based a purchasing entity's requirements via said web-based user interface.

68. (New) The storage medium of claim 67, further comprising instructions for causing said host system to implement:

- analyzing said acquired data in light of recommendations;
- selecting a supplier based upon results of said analyzing; and
- providing supplier selection information and notification to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

69. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, wherein said qualifying suppliers further includes:

- auditing a supplier and submitting results of said auditing to said shared data repository, said results accessible to affected collaborative sources via said web-based user interface.

70. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, wherein said qualifying technologies includes:

- placing a technology survey on the Web, said technology survey accessible to at least one supplier, said technology survey associated with an engineering organization related to a technology being surveyed;

- accessing a completed technology survey via said web-based user interface by said engineering organization; and

- analyzing said completed technology survey and qualifying said at least one supplier based on results of said analyzing.

71. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, wherein said qualifying parts includes:

- accessing part qualification data via said web-based user interface;
- analyzing said part qualification data; and
- qualifying said parts based upon results of said analyzing.

72. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, wherein said managing proposed changes to a supplier process includes:

submitting a proposed process change to said shared data repository by a supplier, said proposed process change accessible to collaborative sources affected by said proposed process change via said web-based user interface;

accessing said proposed process change;

analyzing said proposed process change; and

determining whether to accept said proposed process change based upon said analyzing.

73. (New) The storage medium of claim 72, wherein said proposed changes include at least one of short-term process change, long-term process change, and off-specification change.

74. (New) The storage medium of claim 66, wherein said performing quality management functions includes:

identifying potential problems relating to a supplier;

alerting affected collaborative sources of said potential problems;

notifying management; and

collaborating with said supplier associated with said potential problems for determining a resolution; and

generating a problem report.

75. (New) The storage medium of claim 74, wherein problem reports are categorized by at least one of:

supplier;

problem reports that have been open for more than one month;

problem reports of a critical nature; and

problem reports related to a particular final product.

76. (New) The storage medium of claim 69, wherein said results of said auditing include:

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audit schedules,
completed audit listings; and
audit reports.

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